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of Industrial Women's...

Labour women on
international legislation

[London]

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THE LABOUR PARTY.

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. LABOUR WOMEN .
ON
International Legislation.

Women's Employment
The Employment of Children
The Prevention of Unemployment

BY

GERTRUDE M. TUCKWELL

MARION PHILLIPS, D.Sc. (Econ.)

A. SUSAN LAWRENCE, L.C.C.

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- XII. The Economic Functions of the League of Nations.
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- XIV. Questions of Special Interest to Women.

APPENDICES.

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LABOUR WOMEN
on
INTERNATIONAL LEGISLATION

Promulgated by the International Federation of Working Women
Second International Conference of Working Women
Geneva, 1920.

WOMEN'S LABOUR POLICY

By the International Federation of Working Women
Geneva, 1920.

THE INTERNATIONAL CODE OF HUMANITY

By the International Federation of Working Women
Geneva, 1920.

THE PREVENTION OF UNEMPLOYMENT

By A. S. G. (Chairman) and the International Commission on the Prevention of Unemployment
Geneva, 1920.

Published by the International Federation of Working Women, S.W.1.

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LABOUR WOMEN ON INTERNATIONAL LEGISLATION

Proposals for International Legislation agreed upon by the Standing Joint Committee of Industrial Women's Organisations on :—

WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT.

By GERTRUDE M. TUCKWELL (Chairman of the Women's Trade Union League).

THE EMPLOYMENT OF CHILDREN.

By MARION PHILLIPS, D.Sc. (Econ.) (Chief Woman Officer of the Labour Party).

THE PREVENTION OF UNEMPLOYMENT.

By A. SUSAN LAWRENCE (Member of the London County Council and of the Executive of the Labour Party).

Published by the Labour Party, 33, Eccleston Square, S.W.1.

DA/HW

The Standing Joint Committee of Industrial Women's Organisations.

Chairman - Miss MARY MACARTHUR.
Vice-Chairman - Miss MARGARET LLEWELYN DAVIES.
Secretary - Dr. MARION PHILLIPS,
33, Ecclestone Square, London, S.W.1.

Organisations Represented:

Women's Trade Union League.
The Labour Party.
Women's Co-operative Guild.
Railway Women's Guild.
National Federation of Women Workers.
National Union of General Workers.
Railway Clerks' Association.
Workers' Union.
Postal and Telegraph Clerks' Association.

The Standing Joint Committee of Industrial Women's Organisations was founded in 1916, and, from time to time since, its constitution has been amended in order that it may better fulfil its objects. In general terms these are to watch over the interests of working women, and help to carry out the principles of the Labour and Co-operative Movements in so far as women are specially concerned. The Committee also acts as an advisory body on women's questions to the Executive Committee of the Labour Party.

In order that it may be fully representative of all women within the Labour and Co-operative Movements it invites representation from the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress, the Co-operative Union and "industrial organisations, of which a substantial number of the members are women, which are national in character, and are accepted by the Committee."

The Committee will welcome any enquiries for further information or applications for representation, and these should be made to the Secretary, Dr. Marion Phillips, 33, Ecclestone Square, London, S.W.1.

Dec 26, 1929

INTRODUCTION.

The three papers included in this pamphlet have been prepared by members of the Standing Joint Committee of Industrial Women's Organisations to form a women's programme on certain important questions which are ripe for international agreement. They have also an immediate purpose in view of the calling of the first International Labour Conference, which is announced for October 29 at Washington, U.S.A. This Congress will be held under the provisions of the Peace Treaty, which establishes in the League of Nations Covenant provisions for an International Labour Office and a yearly International Labour Conference. The agenda, which has been already published, is as follows:—

- (1) Application of principle of 8 hours day, or 48 hours week.
- (2) Question of preventing or providing against unemployment.
- (3) Women's employment—
 - (a) Before and after child birth, including the question of maternity benefit;
 - (b) During the night;
 - (c) In unhealthy processes.
- (4) Employment of children—
 - (a) Minimum age of employment;
 - (b) During the night;
 - (c) In unhealthy processes.
- (5) Extension and application of the International Conventions adopted at Berne in 1906 on the prohibition of night work for women employed in industry, and the prohibition of the use of white phosphorus in the manufacture of matches.

It will be seen that the third, fourth, and fifth proposals deal particularly with matters of importance to women, and in view of the special hardships now being experienced by women all over the world as a result of unemployment, the second question also has its special interest for them. The Standing Joint Committee of Industrial Women's Organisations in the interests of women has prepared this short programme for dealing with their needs. They are of opinion that if these proposals were adopted internationally much would be done to relieve the worst hardships which fall upon women to-day.

The Covenant of the League of Nations which establishes the Labour Conference has some interesting provisions with regard to women. The whole is of course governed by the agreement that throughout the bodies connected with the League of Nations all positions under or in connection with the League, including the secretariat, shall be open equally to men and women. But with regard to the International Labour Conference a further provision is made that when questions especially affecting women are to be considered, one at least of the advisers who accompany the delegates should be a woman. Each nation will be entitled to four representatives, two representing the Government, and two representing respectively the employers and workpeople; and each delegate may be accompanied by advisers, the maximum being two for each item on the agenda of the meeting. It is for women throughout the nations to take advantage of these provisions and to ensure that they shall be fully represented, not only by representation amongst

the advisers, but by representation amongst the delegates also. At this first Congress Miss Margaret Bondfield and Miss Mary Macarthur will represent women amongst the Labour advisers, and there will also, it is understood, be women representatives amongst those appointed for the Government; but it is important that in future this representation shall be larger, and that it shall not be confined to the two or three nations which have been most progressive in regard to women's affairs, but shall be general amongst them all.

In considering Labour legislation of an international character, it is clear that many difficulties arise from the fact that national Labour legislation has advanced in very different degrees amongst the different peoples. Provisions that may appear to be revolutionary to one may even go very little further than present law in another. In many respects the Committee which has agreed to the proposals here put forward realise that they may meet with criticism of this kind from both sides. To some of their Labour colleagues it may appear that they have not gone far enough—to less friendly critics it may appear that they are asking far too much of backward communities. What they have endeavoured to do is to set forward a programme which is worth working for, and which, if it could be carried to-day, would mean a very definite improvement in the general standard of living throughout the world. They have dealt only with the subjects set down for the Washington Conference, recognising, of course, that these do not cover more than a small part of the whole field open for future Labour legislation on an international basis. Their aim also has been not to give a full and detailed account of the present state of the law, but to make a general statement as to what that law should aim at in the future.

September, 1919.

WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT.

BY GERTRUDE M. TUCKWELL.

In the past the nations have availed themselves of women's work, but treated it as of inferior value to that of men, and hedged it round with artificial restrictions. The influence of the old ideas which theoretically relegated women to home duties and left the outside work of the world to men still hampers us long after the necessities of society have led to women's entrance into every field of work. It hampers us because the prejudices engendered by the customs of the past have made clear thinking difficult, and we have tolerated conditions in which, owing to the inferior value placed on their labour, women have been underpaid and, as a consequence, under-nourished; have received little or no education or training for work; and have had to compete in the labour market handicapped by an equipment of the most meagre description.

In the interests of national efficiency all handicaps should be removed. Unnecessary grading by sex has led to the competition of two classes of workers at varying rates of payment, and so enabled employers to play off one class of labour against another with disastrous results. Recent Government inquiries in this country show the great measure of success which women's work has so far achieved in spite of the artificial disabilities imposed on it, and there is a general and growing recognition that women, freed from artificial disabilities, can compete on equal terms with men, and that it is desirable that they should do so.

They have been engaged in the heaviest kinds of labouring work, and as science is being brought to bear to economise human energy, the introduction of labour-saving appliances is equalising differences in physical strength which may still exist. Proposals for the limitation of hours to a 48-hour week will affect equally men and the women who have been statutorily allowed a 10 and a 10½-hour day. The same opportunities in educational training joined to intelligent management of work-places and vocational selection will show that there are classes of work in which women not only equal but excel men. They have men's backing in demanding the same rate for the job, in which they are supported by the recommendations of the Women's Employment Committee set up by the Government, and the Minority Report of the War Cabinet Committee. Given the minimum of purchasing power required for efficiency, the tendency is to differentiate not by sex but skill in a labour market from which the labour of all but the adult will be gradually eliminated.

But it must be remembered that one disability has to be reckoned with. Women have been called on to bear a double burden, and to meet the claims of both work and home. They must continue to fulfil their greatest function of mothers and home-makers. Our recommendations have to safeguard this while seeing that it does not interfere with their position of equality in the labour market.

We lay down two principles: That no bar should be placed on women's work which is not imperatively dictated by the demands of the race and the health and well-being of mother and child, and that, when it is proved that work is injurious to maternity, any prohibition should carry with it adequate compensation for the lost wage. To do otherwise is to penalise motherhood.

We are asked to consider three sets of restrictions which at present bear on maternity:-

1. Women's Employment before and after childbirth.
2. Night work.
3. Employment of women in unhealthy processes.

I. Women's Employment Before and After Childbirth.

Medical opinion appears to vary as to the effects on health of employment before childbirth, and, so far, no prohibition has been attempted in Great Britain.

In other countries a few attempts have been made to deal with this question by legislation, and Italy prohibits work before childbirth in the rice fields for a month, but the great difficulties of prohibition are everywhere apparent, and Switzerland, having first enacted, afterwards withdrew, prohibition, finding it impossible to enforce. Though the right to leave work without notice before confinement and the right of reinstatement afterwards have been given by some States, Holland and Poland (recently) are the only countries which require the payment of full average wages before, as well as after, childbirth, during the period of prohibition.

While it is clear that various physical exertions, such as lifting, wheeling of heavy weights, etc., are undesirable, certain periods during the months of pregnancy are more critical than others. Evidence as to the period of pregnancy reached can only be obtained from the woman herself. This she may be unable to fix accurately, or may wish to conceal. Under such circumstances, the difficulties in fixing any time-limit for the cessation of employment are great, and, moreover, there is no consensus of opinion as to its danger. It is held by many medical authorities that, provided the work is not too heavy, it is in the best interests of mother and child that no embargo should be laid on it, the only precautions needed being those dictated by the decency and tact of the management of the workplace.

But bearing in mind the fact that many women prefer to remain at home during the last months of pregnancy, and so sacrifice a wage at the very point when nourishment is most essential; that no general rule can be laid down as to their health, which varies with individuals; and that there is little direct evidence as to the effect of employment on the health of pregnant women, we feel that scientific inquiry is needed to decide whether and to what extent prohibition is necessary.*

Employment after childbirth is more easily controlled, since there is a fixed date from which prohibition can operate, and there is no dispute as to the need for temporary prohibition, though opinions as to the period vary from one country to another.

Here under the Factory and Workshop Act a period of four weeks is decreed—in some countries a shorter limit is set, in others a longer. Spain gives six weeks, for example, and South Africa eight.

In some countries exceptions are made, the medically fit returning to work at an earlier date than the term prescribed generally.

Though Holland and Poland have been cited as having alone arrived at payments based on the just principle of compensation equivalent to the loss entailed by statutory prohibition of employment, many

* We would, however, point out that the provision of recompence for loss of wages does not provide for the skilled care, nourishment, and rest required by all mothers alike, and that, in addition to any such provision in industrial legislation, there must be general health legislation covering the needs of all mothers.

countries, including our own, make some sort of payment to meet maternity claims.

These payments come from various sources, and seem mostly to be based rather on the value of motherhood to the State than on the idea of compensation for loss. In some cases, as in the grants made from our Insurance schemes for maternity benefit, the schemes are contributory, in others gratuitous—in none are they adequate.

There is in this country and in many others some system, either Governmental or municipal, of medical and nursing service for maternity side by side with maternity grants.

But when the question of whether or no a period of prohibition before childbirth is desirable is settled, and a consensus of opinion arrived at as to the period during which after childbirth prohibition is essential, there remains the further question of the removal of the double burden of home-keeping and care of children, which now, after a specified period—varying in different countries—is coincident in many cases with wage-earning. The wage-earning mother cannot give the care necessary to efficiently rear the future citizens of the State, nor can her work take its proper place in the labour market if she is handicapped by home cares. This is recognised in the case of widows and of women whose husbands suffer from some permanent disability by some American States, and a pension is granted in such cases in order to enable the mother to fulfil her home duties. The trade unionists of this country advocate the same step here, and their view is upheld by the reports of Government Committees, who recommend such pensions. But this only partly solves the question.

Individual wages must be based not on the family to be supported but on the value of the individual worker to the employer. The minimum wage has to be fixed with relation to individual needs for a full and healthy life. But the claims of the children have also to be considered, on whom the State depends for a sufficient supply of healthy and efficient future citizens.

In this country these claims have been recognised in two instances. Our income-tax falls less heavily on parents than on those who have no children, £25 being deducted from the assessable income for each child—an allowance which is to be increased to £40. The other instance is the system which has come in with the war, of pensions to the widows and children of soldiers, a sum of 26s. 8d. per week being granted to the mother, and 10s. per week for her first child, 7s. 6d. for her second, and 6s. for each succeeding child. It will be seen, however, that neither of these schemes covers the whole ground, since the income-tax, which is paid on incomes over £130 a year, does not touch those in most need, and the system of pensioning wives and children of soldiers is due to war exigencies, though most interesting as an experiment in the direction of removing mothers from the labour market and enabling them to care for their children. There are many proposals here and elsewhere for full and systematic schemes of grants to parents on account of their children, to apply in the case of the home-keeping as in that of the "employed" woman, lest the limitation of endowment should penalise those married women who prefer to remain at home and induce them to work in order to qualify for grants. The arguments against such schemes are based on the fear that they may prejudice the payment of adequate wages, and also on the idea that they may remove the sense of responsibility of parents to their children, on which so much depends. The various State services of free education and the

Institution of free meals, against which exactly the same arguments used to be raised, have not, however, been found to produce this effect. But in view of the fact that the anomaly is not complete, and of the disastrous effect of a fall in wages, some schemes would safeguard the position by allowing pensions only in cases where more than two children had to be provided for, taking two children as a normal family and a charge on the parent's wage. It is clear that the evils with which the proposals deal are so great that the arguments in favour of meeting them by some system of effective provision for the children far outweigh any that has been raised against them.

All the reports which so far deal with this question here are vitiated by the fact that we have no accurate Government statistics to rely on as to the cost, and we cannot proceed on fancy figures. We urge the immediate institution of Government Commissions to report on the best means of carrying into effect an approved scheme for enabling all women who have children to stay at home and care for them.

The Government inquiries would, on this subject as well as on that of the period of prohibition before and after childbirth, be national, the results to be reported to the International Labour Office, not with a view of postponing action on the part of this or any other country, but of comparing experiences and co-ordinating legislation.

2. Night Work for Women.

Night work for women is the second subject for consideration. The International Convention of 1906 forbidding night work for women has already been adhered to by eleven European States. It is obvious that in the interests of home-life and health this was necessary, but while night work by men and, to a limited extent, by male young persons continues customary in certain industries, it is also obvious that this places a disability on women's labour. The same argument as to inadequate rest in noisy homes, if sleep is taken during the day, and the break up of the family by the employment of some members during night and others during the day applies to both sexes. The case for prohibiting the labour of male young persons is clear, and some international agreement in this case can probably be arrived at, but it is essential that except in rare circumstances, such as that of continuous industries, night work for men should also be prohibited. Night work should be the exception and not the rule, so that prohibition applies to all classes of labour, and exceptions should be carefully guarded. It has already been pointed out that so far as young persons are concerned, the claims of education and training must lead to their gradual elimination from the labour market altogether.

3. Employment of Women in Unhealthy Processes.

The third reference is to the employment of women in unhealthy processes.

The danger in such processes arises mainly from either the inhalation of dust and fumes (the case of lead in potteries may be cited as an example of dust danger), or from absorption through the skin, as in the case of T.N.T. poisoning (Trinitrotoluol).

There are cases in which the trades can be so safeguarded by protective regulation and scientific appliances as to render the dangerous

ingredient harmless. There are other cases in which the danger can only be removed by eliminating the dangerous ingredient.

In this, as in all other cases, the proper policy is to deal with the material and eliminate the danger there, not to prohibit a class of labour. The trade should be made safe for all adult workers.*

The resources of scientific research must be stimulated to find substitutes for dangerous ingredients, and the promptitude with which science responded when the sufferings caused by the use of Trichlorethane in the dope of aeroplanes called for immediate action is the most recent example of what can be done on these lines here.

It is interesting that the Convention of 1906 attacked the danger of white phosphorus used in the manufacture of matches in this way, and the prohibition of the dangerous material rather than restrictions on labour was thus made a precedent for international action in dangerous trades.

The only dangerous processes in which in this country women's employment is forbidden are processes in which lead is used. In the smelting of materials containing lead, in the manufacture of red or orange lead, in the manufacture of flaked litharge, in the manipulation of dry compounds of lead or in pasting for the manufacture of electric accumulators, in manipulating lead colour, in the manufacture of paints and colours, and in the casting shops for the casting of brass their employment is forbidden. The prohibition was supported by arguments as to the difficulty of finding substitutes in the case of white phosphorus, and in the greater rate of sickness which was held to show great susceptibility of women. In the case of potteries where lead is used in glazes, women's employment has only been forbidden in certain processes, and the alternative we lay down of dealing with the materials and not the worker has been adopted. Special advantages are given to employers who use only a limited amount (5 per cent.) of lead in glazes, further advantages to those who use leadless glaze, and power taken to close factories where there are cases of lead-poisoning. We do not feel that the mixture of methods is ideal, and look to the eventual prohibition of the use of lead in potteries.

The recent great falling off in the incidence of lead cases in Staffordshire, for example, cannot be wholly explained by the various provisions for exhaust ventilation, medical examination, washing accommodation, etc.; it has to be realized that there has been a great substitution of leadless for lead glazes during the same period.

The matter is ripe for international discussion with a view to common action.

The practice of allowing exemption by numbers vitiates much of the legislation of European countries, where dangerous trades, such as pottery making, are carried on in the homes.

An interesting instance of the need for international understanding and co-operation between the nations in stamping out dangerous diseases has been recently furnished by the case of anthrax. In spite of regulation, the numbers of persons suffering from this disease rose steadily till the solution of disinfecting the wools coming from infected areas at the port of embarkation has now been arrived at. This remedy, due to British research, will not be thoroughly applied till it is applied internationally, and we recommend the subject for immediate consideration at Washington.

* We can only accept the temporary prohibition of women's employment in processes as to which medical opinion is agreed that this is necessary in the interests of maternity till the trade is made safe.

Two points have to be borne in mind in our national and international legislation.

First, that the health of every human being is of especial importance, and that legislation by numbers, abandoned in this country but still existing in some others, is entirely vicious. Equal protection must be extended to workers, whether in a place where hundreds are employed or where only one is at work.

Second, that the most ideal legislation is valueless without enforcement. Labour's demand in this country for an increased factory inspectorate, including technical, medical and other expert advisers, to deal with the growing intricacies of our industrial system is urgent. This increased factory inspectorate will, as a matter of course, contain a large number of women who should have equal standing and equal responsibility with their men colleagues, including the charge of definite industrial areas. It is essential that all nations should co-operate with each other in arriving at higher standards of administration, both with regard to prosecution and penalties for offenders and to the number of officers employed.

THE EMPLOYMENT OF CHILDREN. BY MARION PHILLIPS.

The International Labour Conference to be held at Washington will have no more important subject to discuss than that of the employment of children. The war has created a position of tragic difficulty in regard to the children of European countries. After years of acute privation, and in many cases of complete interruption of all education, the position in such countries as Serbia, Bulgaria, Hungary, and in many parts of France and Belgium, has been very serious. In the programme that we put forward we have recognised this, and we are aware that in their needs of increased production it will be urged that it is necessary not to tighten up the regulations with regard to the employment of children, but to relax them. This is a very shortsighted policy. We cannot borrow any longer from the strength of the rising generation without piling up the debt, which, when it comes to be paid, will mean overwhelming ruin for many communities. We therefore make no apology for putting forward a programme for international agreement on this subject which has the high ideal that children should not be employed for profit, and that all their educational opportunities should be greatly extended. The first question is that of an age-limit. The fixation of an age-limit below which no children shall be employed for profit may well be the same in all countries. For even in hot countries, where it is pleaded that children develop more quickly and are adults at an earlier age, probably nothing would aid their slower and more effective development so much as an extended time of education without the pressure of industrial or agricultural employment. Indeed, nowhere should the hours of labour be shorter for the young than in tropical climates. It is, therefore, suggested that no child should be employed below the age of 16. It is necessary that compulsory full-time education should be extended up to this age in order that there may be no break between the two periods. A child

should not be employed between the ages of 16 and 18 for the full time allowed for adults. Its education should be continued, and the time for this education should be taken out of working hours. Continuation schools should be established in which the children should spend half their time—that is, on a 44-hours week, 22 hours work and 22 hours school. School might occupy two or three days in the week, or even so many weeks in the year, but the basis should be one which would give on the whole year an average equal at least to 20 hours in the week.

The whole purpose of the age limit is to ensure that children shall not be employed to the detriment of their physical and mental development. It is, however, necessary that there should be more than an age limit, and every child before being allowed to enter employment should receive a certificate showing that he or she has mentally and physically a normal development. This can best be arranged by the development of the school medical services. Before leaving a full-time school each child should be subjected to a detailed examination which would show (1) if a satisfactory intellectual development had been reached, normal for that age; (2) if physical development was normal; (3) any defect, especially defects of such a kind as to make a particular employment unsuitable. On this subject perhaps investigation is necessary before compulsion can be applied, but the certificate should contain very definite recommendations as to the employment in which the particular child should not be occupied. After this examination the child should remain under the supervision of the school medical service during its years in the continuation school, and from time to time its condition should be specially reviewed with a view to seeing that the employment was not having a bad effect.

Coupled with these requirements must come the possibility of remedial treatment. Any child held to be below normal should be prohibited from engaging in employment until a normal standard be reached, but during the period of the prohibition there should be ample opportunity for improvement in the mental and physical condition. There should be provision, e.g., for convalescent homes for those of tuberculous types, and eye treatment for those with disease of the eyes, special gymnastic training for undeveloped muscles, and in particular there should be special attention given to means by which full and sufficient food should be within reach of those who were found to be suffering from delicacy due to under-nourishment. Remedial measures must be coupled with economic provision so as to enable the family to which the defective child belongs to provide it with a proper home during the period when it may not be employed, and it is clear that there must be special schools for backward children in order that they can rise to a higher standard. This sounds a very expensive proposal. We have already pointed out that in the long run it will cost less than allowing undeveloped children to be forced into wage-earning employment. But it will also have a very great influence in securing better medical supervision and special school treatment at an earlier age in order to save the years when the children might be assisting in the productive work of the country. In addition to these proposals there must be supervision and advice as to the kind of employment into which a child shall go. As the knowledge of industrial processes and their effects upon the young is accumulated it will be possible to see definitely that children of certain physical types should be excluded altogether from some industries. Until there is complete certainty upon these matters it would be unwise to recommend compulsion, but while there is no compulsion there may still be advice and supervision after the child has entered the employment.

The suitability of employment may be dealt with also by improvements in the conditions of the industries themselves. It is important that in all dangerous processes special protection should be given to the young, and it must be noted that boys and girls between 16 and 18 are far less likely to be careful themselves in using safety appliances than older people. It is more difficult to take precautionary measures and to make a process safe for boys and girls than for men and women, and therefore their employment should be more restricted by law than may be necessary for adults. The same applies to night work. No boy or girl under 18 years of age should be allowed to work by night no matter what the particular occupation may be.

PREVENTION OF UNEMPLOYMENT.

BY A. SUSAN LAWRENCE, L.C.C.

Much has been said and written on the question of unemployment. Up to the present time, however, no Government has either made any practical attempt to solve the question, or has undertaken the preliminary work of statistical inquiry with the necessary fullness and detail.

One branch of the question has, it is true, been explored with some approach to completeness. We have statistics of unemployment extending over a considerable period, and from those, and other trade statistics, we are tolerably well informed as to the main causes of unemployment, the seasonal and cyclical variations of trade.

From the point of view of international labour legislation the question of preventing unemployment must almost wholly be confined to the unemployment which arises from the cyclical fluctuations of trade.

Seasonal fluctuations, though causing much distress, and probably preventable to a considerable degree, are obviously matters for each country to settle locally.

The cyclical fluctuations of trade occur with fair regularity over a period of about ten to seven years, and appear in a large number of instances to affect many countries simultaneously.

A certain amount of trade fluctuation is no doubt inseparable from a progressive condition of industry. Extreme and violent expansions and contractions of trade are, however, a unmixed evil, not solely on account of the distress caused to workers by a period of acute unemployment, but also on account of the disturbance they cause to credit and production.

It would appear that the governmental action might be effective in two directions—firstly in preventing the occurrence of extreme and violent fluctuations in industry, and secondly in mitigating the effect of these fluctuations by an adjustment of the State demand for goods.

Fluctuations in Industry.

While, as has been said, some of the causes of trade fluctuation are probably irremovable, the cause of sudden and violent booms and slumps does not appear either to be difficult to trace or impossible to remedy.

It is, in short, nothing more recondite than the ignorance of the ordinary manufacturer of the extent of the actual demand, and of the extent to which other firms are meeting it.

Let us suppose there is a demand for more clothing. Each manufacturer feels the demand; each desires to receive as large as possible a share of the market. In doing so, he has probably not a very accurate knowledge of the total demand; he has almost certainly no knowledge of what his competitors are doing. His desire is to get in quickly and receive as much as he can for himself. There will, therefore, be a boom in trade. There will follow a glutting of the market, prices will fall, manufacturing will diminish, and a period of unemployment will follow. Now it is clear enough that the boom would not be so high or the corresponding slump so low, if accurate full returns as to production and demand were available to industry at frequent intervals. No such statistics exist at the present time.

In each country, it is true, Government departments collect and publish a considerable amount of trade information.

The various countries, however, and the different departments in each country work independently, and the work of obtaining and of collating such returns is a task almost unbearably difficult to experts and impossible for the ordinary trader.

Further, this information is directed mainly to informing manufacturers of the demand for certain classes of goods. The statistics of production and the extent to which fresh capital is being invested in any class of business are not compiled or published. The mere information, for instance, that boots are demanded in the Argentine will doubtless encourage English manufacturers to make boots; but to prevent an over-production of boots and a consequent glutting of the market, something else is needed—information is needed as to how far that demand is being met by manufacturers in this and in other countries.

What is needed in the first instance is an international bureau charged with the duty of making and publishing trade returns. Such returns should include—what no returns now show—statistics of the production contemplated as measured by the formation of fresh companies or the calls for new capital on the part of existing companies.

It is true that the reference to the Labour Conference at Washington is too narrow to allow that Conference to set up such a bureau. The Labour representatives at Washington should emphasize the fact that unemployment cannot be dealt with as if it were independent of trade and finance; and that the question of the prevention of unemployment must be dealt with not purely as a labour question, but also as an industrial question, by the League of Nations as a whole. In pursuance of this policy, a memorandum on the above lines should be forwarded to the Council of the League, and that they should be asked to take action and to set up an international bureau for the purpose of supplying the returns required.

Regulation of National Demand.

As has been said above, it is probably possible to prevent the extreme violence of trade crises generally by collecting and publishing comprehensive statistics with regard to production. The problem would thus be rendered easier, but not completely solved here.

It is possible, as is shown below, to prove that in certain important

industries unemployment might be reduced, either wholly or very greatly. It is not, however, possible to indicate the total number of the unemployed which any Government adopting such a policy might have to deal with—or the total cost to the community.

There remains to be discussed the possibility of diminishing the effect of trade fluctuations by an adjustment of State demands.

Here, too, the question has been imperfectly explored.

One very well-known attempt has been made to estimate in numbers and money the possible task of the Government in this country in dealing with unemployment—that of Professor Bowley—and in view of the expert criticism which may be expected, it may be as well to point out that these figures should be read with the utmost caution.

The figures upon which he relies are the figures of unemployment given by the "Board of Trade Gazette."

These figures show for the years from 1896 to 1912 an unemployment percentage varying from 6.9 in the worst year (1894) to a percentage of 2.3 in the best year (1900).

It must be noted that the figures of the Board of Trade are obtained from the returns of certain unions only, mainly trades such as shipbuilding, peculiarly liable to fluctuations. They have no bearing on certain stable occupations such as railways, municipal employees and agriculture. Professor Bowley, therefore, after taking these questions into consideration, estimated (in 1909) that "200,000 or fewer able-bodied adult males are out of work from non-seasonal causes one year with another, and have no sufficient resources, and that this number fluctuates from 100,000 in the best year to 300,000 in the worst" (evidence before the Royal Commission on Poor Law), and that additional wages to the extent of £10,000,000 a year are needed in order to bring the worst year with regard to unemployment on a level with the best. There appears, however, some reason for doubting Professor Bowley's estimate:—

1. He deals with males only.
2. He excludes from consideration not merely railway and municipal employees and agriculture, but coal, cotton, and some other textiles and shipbuilding.
3. His figures are based upon the Census of 1901.
4. He estimates the average weekly wage of each male at £1 a week only.

It would appear, therefore, very dangerous for any representative at Washington, in dealing with the prevention of unemployment, to rely upon Professor Bowley's estimate. It may be as well to put in this warning, as the estimate has been very widely quoted and is most open to criticism.

The direct part which each Government can play in reducing unemployment can, however, be shown to be considerable. In certain industries cyclical (as distinguished from seasonal) unemployment can be almost wholly eliminated; in others, it can be considerably reduced.

The building trade is an instance of a very great amount of unemployment which might be prevented by the regulation of public works. Building, as the following table shows, is subject to very great fluctuations which appear to follow a cycle of their own. Here the percentage of unemployment varies from 8 per cent. in the worst year (1905) to 0.9 per cent. in the best.

The total numbers of males employed in building in July, 1914, were 920,000, the difference between the best and worst years being rather

more than 7 per cent. If employment, therefore, in the building trade were made stable, unemployment in the worst years would be reduced by no less than 64,000 persons. This is a trade in which such an experiment is peculiarly hopeful. Local authorities have already been accustomed to work to a programme extending over a considerable number of years, under the direction of a Government Department. This is so in housing. The L.C.C. has now in hand a five years' programme providing for rehousing 185,000 persons in five years. In the same way the Board of Education has imposed on the same authority a plan for remodelling its schools extending over many years. The need for housing will for many years certainly be far greater than the supply, and the same is true of the modernisation of our school buildings generally. It appears, therefore, that the acceleration of such programmes in bad years could be arranged in order to meet unemployment.

The arrangement of such programmes for building would also affect the light metal industries. No figures can be given here; but it is clear that the provision of the fireplaces, piping, locks and bolts, and all the miscellaneous metal articles required in fitting up houses would depend largely on an arranged programme for building.

Woollen Trade.

We have further a carefully worked-out analysis of the effect of a Government programme contained in a paper by Mr. Wood, secretary of the Woollen and Worsted Trades Federation.

The paper is printed in the proceedings of the National Conference for the Prevention of Destitution, 1911, and should be one of the documents taken to the Conference by any Labour adviser on the question.

The net result of this elaborate investigation is to show that the regularisation of the central Government's demands would be to reduce unemployment in the worst years from 7 per cent. to 4 per cent.

The total number of those employed in the woollen and worsted trade was 117,000 males and 150,000 females in July, 1914. The scheme would, therefore, reduce the number of unemployed persons by about 5,000 in the worst years.

Roads and Construction.

In these works—as in housing—the amount of useful work to be done is almost unlimited. There would appear to be no difficulty in drawing up a programme of work—in executing the necessary surveying and acquiring the powers over sites to be taken in the earlier years of the period. Such work would then be capable of very great acceleration in time of depression.

Separate statistics of unemployment in such work are not available, and it is, therefore, impossible to estimate the number of persons who might then be against unemployment.

Shipbuilding.

The shipbuilding trade is one peculiarly exposed to fluctuation, and here it is clear that a programme of Government shipbuilding could nearly eliminate fluctuation. The variations in employment in the shipbuilding trade are very great. The Board of Trade give the percentage for the shipbuilding trade independently for the years 1894-1900, vary-

ing, as will be seen, from no less than 15.7 per cent. in the worst year to 2.3 in the best.

In July, 1914, shipbuilding was estimated to employ 180,000 males and a few females. The difference in the best and worst year is, roughly, 13 per cent. Unemployment in the worst year would, therefore, be reduced by about 23,000 persons if a scheme of equalisation were adopted.

Engineering.

Engineering from obvious reasons fluctuates to a certain extent in sympathy with shipbuilding. It appears tolerably clear, therefore, that to reduce unemployment in shipbuilding would of itself be sufficient to very greatly reduce the fluctuations in the engineering trade.

There must also be a certain amount of unemployment caused by fluctuation of shipbuilding in the iron and steel trades and in coal as well upon the demand made by these workers for articles commonly purchased by them, e.g., furniture.

The stabilisation of shipbuilding, therefore, would have a substantial effect upon unemployment here, and therefore probably on imports.

Government programmes of shipbuilding, dependent as they are upon political considerations, are no doubt difficult of adjustment. It might, however, be possible to point out to the Council of the League of Nations the advantages which would result in such adjustment for their consideration.

The publication, however, as is suggested in the first part of this report of the amounts of fresh capital being invested in the trade would most certainly in this instance modify the extreme fluctuation of this industry.

Imperfect as the above instances are, they do in fact represent almost the whole of the detailed information that can be obtained.

The Government demand for boots, cotton goods, metal goods, hemp and metal goods must be very considerable, but as far as^a can be ascertained no detailed review such as exists for the woollen trade is available.

The Labour representatives at Washington cannot, therefore, prove the case for the Government regulation of demand by any body of elaborate and detailed statistics. They can, however, insist upon a pledge that all Governments shall adopt the principle of regularising their demand for goods in accordance with the state of the labour market, and that the effect in each trade shall be immediately the subject of detailed investigation.

Engineering.

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